

Over the years, the proliferation of guns in our streets, of criminals packing pistols instead of switchblades, have made crime deadlier than ever. Guns have magnified the malevolence of crime. That is why disarming criminals has been and must continue to be a top crime-fighting priority. Let none of us rest until every American is safe from gun violence.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

### **Memorandum on Deterring and Reducing Gun Crime**

*March 20, 1999*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General*

*Subject: Deterring and Reducing Gun Crime*

Since the start of my Administration, we have developed and implemented a number of effective national strategies to reduce crime. We have provided funds to over 11,000 communities to hire and deploy more than 92,000 local law enforcement officers; we have prevented more than a quarter of a million illegal handgun sales through Brady background checks; and we have developed a coordinated attack on the illegal sources of guns used in crime. Dozens of other smart, tough, crime-fighting strategies have been put in place throughout the country through the leadership and dedicated efforts of State and local police and prosecutors, Mayors, U.S. Attorneys, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), and community leaders.

During this period, the Nation's crime rate has dropped by more than 20 percent, and crime committed with guns has dropped 27 percent. In certain communities, where Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials have worked with other community leaders, violent crime rates have gone down even more dramatically. In Boston, Massachusetts, for example, when law enforcement and community leaders worked together to reduce violence by youth gangs, they reduced the number of homicides among youth by 70 percent in just 2 years. In Minneapolis,

Minnesota, effective law enforcement and prevention efforts conducted by public-private partnerships have reduced homicides by 30 percent and summertime homicides by 75 percent. And in Richmond, Virginia, effective and coordinated law enforcement, including stepped up enforcement of gun crimes through the program known as Project Exile, has reduced the homicide rate significantly.

Still, the number of people killed with firearms remains unacceptably high. More than 14,000 people were murdered with guns in the United States in 1997. We must redouble our efforts to deter and further reduce gun crime—and work to make every neighborhood and community free of gun violence.

I therefore direct you to develop an integrated firearms violence reduction strategy that draws on the proven measures and innovative approaches being demonstrated by communities throughout the country. We know that gun violence issues differ in each community, and no single program or strategy will be right for every community. Therefore, in developing the strategy, you should consult closely with U.S. Attorneys and ATF Special Agents in Charge, as well as other Federal, State, and local law enforcement, elected officials, and other leaders. The strategy should consider the special needs of local communities and strike an appropriate balance between Federal and State law enforcement. I ask that the strategy specifically include elements to:

- (1) Increase investigation and prosecution of significant firearms violations, including illegal possession, use, and trafficking of guns, through innovative programs such as Project Exile and Boston's Operation Ceasefire;
- (2) Expand comprehensive "crime gun" tracing, analysis, and mapping; increase use of ballistics identification technology; and coordinate use of crime gun information to identify illegal gun markets, gun "hot spots," and illegal gun traffickers;
- (3) Strengthen the coordination of law enforcement and regulatory enforcement efforts to ensure compliance with all applicable laws by federally licensed gun dealers and prospective gun purchasers;

- (4) Implement targeted deterrence of violent offenders through (a) improved coordination with probation and parole officials supervising such offenders, and (b) swift and certain punishment for those found to have violated the conditions of their parole or probation; and
- (5) Promote problem-solving analysis and innovative strategies to work closely with community members to identify gun criminals, remove weapons in the hands of juveniles, search for and seize crime guns, and increase the public's knowledge of their community's gun-related crime and violence problem.

Finally, I direct you to make recommendations on how best to allocate Federal resources to support the goals of the strategy you develop. I further direct you to provide me with your report on this integrated firearms violence reduction strategy within 90 days of the date of this memorandum.

**William J. Clinton**

### **Remarks on Returning From Camp David, Maryland**

*March 22, 1999*

#### **Kosovo**

I want to give you a brief update about the situation in Kosovo and make a few comments.

It is clear that Serb forces are now engaged in further attacks on Kosovar civilians. Already more than 40,000 Serb security forces are poised in and around Kosovo, with additional units on the way. These actions are in clear violation of commitments Serbia made last October when we obtained the cease-fire agreement.

As part of our determined efforts to seek a peaceful solution, I asked Ambassador Holbrooke to see President Milosevic and make clear the choice he faces. That meeting is either going on now or should start in the next few minutes. If President Milosevic continues to choose aggression over peace, NATO's military plans must continue to move forward.

I will be in close consultation with our NATO allies and with Congress. Over the weekend, I met with my national security

team to discuss the military options. I also spoke with other NATO leaders by telephone. There is strong unity among the NATO allies. We all agree that we cannot allow President Milosevic to continue the aggression with impunity. I have also sent a letter to President Yeltsin about the urgency of the situation.

Our objective in Kosovo remains clear: to stop the killing and achieve a durable peace that restores Kosovars to self-government, the self-government that President Milosevic stripped away from them a decade ago. We and our NATO allies, and Russia, all agree that this is the right goal. The Kosovar Albanians have accepted this course. Only President Milosevic and Serbia stand in the way of peace. Serbia's mounting aggression must be stopped.

Since the adjournment of the peace talks in Paris less than a week ago, an estimated 30,000 more Kosovars have fled their homes. The number now exceeds more than a quarter of a million people, one out of every eight people in Kosovo. Many of them now are in neighboring Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro, all of which could be quickly drawn into this conflict. So could other nations in the region, including Bosnia where allied determination ended a terrible war, and our allies Greece and Turkey.

Seeking to end this tragedy in Kosovo and finding a peaceful solution is the right thing to do. It is also the smart thing to do, very much in our national interests, if we are to leave a stable, peaceful, and democratic Europe to our children. We have learned a lot of lessons in the last 50 years. One of them surely is that we have a stake in European freedom and security and stability. I hope that can be achieved by peaceful means. If not, we have to be prepared to act.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:50 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke; President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.